



Determine your cost of production now

While it seems now that the cold weather and snow will never go away, the end is near. To ensure a profitable growing season, now is the time to determine your cost of production.

Take time to evaluate your books from the previous year. Look at your income and expenses to make educated projections for the coming season. Farm Center staff encourage farmers to run a stress or shock test on their financials to make sure contingency plans are in place. Farmers can run the numbers using the existing crop prices, accounting for a possibility of a 10% loss in income, 10% increase in expenses or both to occur.

Before signing land rent contracts, figure out how much you can afford to pay in order to still profit from your crop production. If you can't cash flow at the projected prices, do not get locked into a land rent contract. By figuring the cost of your inputs and rent now, you can determine what price is needed to break even.

If you are already locked into a long-term land rent contract, it is time to sit down with the landlord face-to-face. Be honest about your financial situation and the need to negotiate a more affordable rental agreement. Together you may be able to develop a longer term solution, including tying the rent price to your final yield and price. Ideally, at the end of the conversation there should be a written contract signed by both parties.

Similarly, dairy and livestock farmers should evaluate their feed inventory going into spring. If additional feed is

IN THIS ISSUE

- [Determine your cost of production now](#)
- [Meet our new team member](#)
- [Transition with the Farm Center](#)
- [Volunteer update planned](#)
- [Ginseng growers conference is March 22](#)
- [Moratorium nears](#)
- [Subclinical ketosis costs in the dairy herd](#)

INVITE THE FARM CENTER TO SPEAK AT YOUR NEXT EVENT

The Wisconsin Farm Center is always willing to speak at any events that you are planning. Our job is to help those involved with Wisconsin agriculture, and we have a very knowledgeable staff available to provide information to your audiences.

needed, calculate how much will be needed and find a source for any purchases.

For assistance with your cost of production, contact the Wisconsin Farm Center at 1-800-942-2474 or farmcenter@wisconsin.gov. There is no charge for these services, which are available weekdays from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Meet our new team member



The Wisconsin Farm Center welcomes Christy Strobel to our staff. She brings her experience as a farm financial advisor, assisting farmers and agribusinesses in maximizing their profitability through cash flow planning, problem solving and extended risk management services. Previously,

Christy has served as a District Coordinator for the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, and has a degree in Ag Business from the University of Wisconsin- Madison. Christy has two daughters, Kristin (14) and Allie (12).

Transition with the Farm Center

The future of agriculture relies on the transition of farms from one generation to the next. While succession planning can be intimidating, the Wisconsin Farm Center can be there every step along the way.

When should a succession plan begin? As soon as possible. Even young farmers at any age need a plan in place.

The farm transition begins with a conversation with both generations. The beginning farmer needs to outline future goals, and the retiring farmer needs to determine a viable exit strategy.

The Farm Center can help each person through what can be difficult discussions. A neutral third-party can help people see different perspectives and offer suggestions based on past experiences.

Financials on a farm can be complicated, and Farm Center

Past topics include general Farm Center services, estate planning assistance, transition planning, mediation assistance, beginning and minority farmer services and dairy herd diagnostic assistance. We welcome audiences of any size whether it's a group of five people or a packed auditorium.

There is no charge for our time, and we have several helpful brochures that explain more about what's offered. Please keep us in mind when you're planning your next event. Contact DATCP's Farm Center at 1-800-942-2474 or farmcenter@wisconsin.gov.

Submitted by Ty Robloff.



staff can walk through the options of how best to transfer the land, equipment or livestock. The beginning farmer needs a profitable business plan, and the exiting farmer needs to have a sustaining retirement.

A transition can be lengthy. The full process could take a year or more. Some people choose to begin the transition with a transfer of management responsibility before a transfer of assets.

A successful transition may bring together many partners including the University of Wisconsin-Extension, technical colleges, agricultural organizations and local business representatives. While the Farm Center will not offer legal advice, the Farm Center will prepare the plan so it is ready for the attorney the farmer chooses.

Each farm transition is different. Contact DATCP's Farm Center at 1-800-942-2474 or farmcenter@wisconsin.gov.

Volunteer update planned

On April 11 and 12 the Farm Center will be hosting its annual Volunteer Update Training at Chula Vista Resort in the Wisconsin Dells. The update training is a day and a half event where the volunteer mediators and financial advisors, who donate their time and expertise to work with Farm Center clients, are invited to attend various presentations and breakout groups designed to further their education, add to their skill sets and meet U.S. Department of Agriculture mandated training requirements. The training also allows the volunteers to catch up with each other's lives and to share their knowledge base.

This training is often times the only opportunity the volunteers have to meet during the year as they are located across the state. This year's training will feature sessions on the Affordable Care Act, transition planning and the newly passed Farm Bill among others. The Farm Center looks forward to welcoming its volunteers to this important event.

Submitted by John Dupuis.

Ginseng growers conference is March 22

The Wisconsin Ginseng Growers Conference, titled “Growing Quality Ginseng Roots,” is the first event collaboration between DATCP and the Ginseng Board of Wisconsin. This conference will be held at the Stoney Creek Hotel & Conference Center (1100 Imperial Ave, Rothschild, WI 54474) on March 22. It is open to the Wisconsin ginseng growers and general public. Pre-registration is required.

This conference will empower and advance Wisconsin’s ginseng growers on crucial topics that are essential to continue growing quality ginseng roots; which in turn, can change the future of the Ginseng Market. Special guest speakers will be invited to address on the topics of Risk Management, Ginseng Insect Pest Management, Plant Pathology and Pesticide Research, Annual Ginseng Registration & Certification, and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).

Lunch will be provided along with opportunities for break-out discussion sessions throughout the conference. Break out tracks will be translated into Hmong for growers.

For more information, contact the Farm Center’s Jack Chang at 608-224-5050 or Jack.Chang@wisconsin.gov.

Submitted by Jack Chang.

Moratorium nears

As spring gets closer, so does April 15th. While that’s traditionally tax day, it’s also the last day of the moratorium that investor owned utilities and many electric coops abide by for electrical disconnection. During the winter months investor owned utilities are prohibited to disconnect electrical service to residential units from November 1st to April 15th. While electric coops do not fall under the Wisconsin Public Service Commission’s authority, many observe the moratorium.

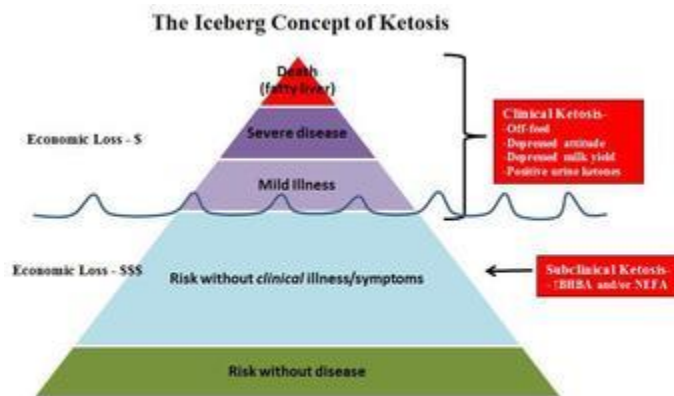
With the date nearing it’s important that if you are behind on your bill, you make contact with the utility now to explore what options you have. The Wisconsin Farm Center receives calls every year regarding people receiving a notice of disconnect or that their service has already been stopped due to non-payment. We encourage a call now to avoid service interruption.

It is important to note that while regulated utilities cannot

stop service to residences during the moratorium, separate farm service may be stopped due to non-payment at any time of the year. The Wisconsin Farm Center is available to answer any disconnect questions you may have at 1-800-942-2474 or farmcenter@wisconsin.gov.

Submitted by John Dupuis.

Subclinical ketosis costs in the dairy herd



All dairy producers are familiar with the condition of ketosis in their herd since this is a common disease of adult cattle, especially early in lactation. Generally speaking ketosis occurs as a result of excessive body fat loss or mobilization in early lactation when her energy intake is far less than her energy expenditure. This negative energy balance is the result of heavy milk production and the fact that her feed intake is lagging behind what her actual needs are. The more negative the energy balance is the more severe the symptoms of ketosis. Milk production and reproductive performance will be adversely affected. There is significant amount of research that has demonstrated that a cow with ketosis will also be much more susceptible to other diseases such as mastitis, displaced abomasum, retained placenta and subsequent uterus infections. These cows are much more likely to be sold, especially in the first 60 days of their lactation, a period when they should be most profitable.

Like most diseases, ketosis can present itself in either a clinical or subclinical form. Clinically ketotic cows are depressed, have poor appetites and suffer from low milk production. Urine can easily be tested for the presence of ketones. These cows are usually easily identified by the

producer for treatment. Subclinically ketotic cows are, by definition, normal in appearance and are not outwardly demonstrating any of the above clinical symptoms. However, their production and health are adversely affected and since they do not show obvious clinical signs they often do not receive immediate treatment. It has been estimated that 7-14% of dairy cattle will have clinical ketosis in the first 60 days after calving. Subclinical ketosis rates are much higher – estimates are that the subclinical rates will be 3-4 times higher than the clinical rate. Thus, in a 100 cow herd there will normally be about 10 cows diagnosed with clinical ketosis per year. But there will be 30-40 that may not be diagnosed because they are subclinical.

In a recently published paper in the American Association of Bovine Practitioners Proceedings, it was estimated that one case of subclinical ketosis can result in losses of up to \$330. The losses come from lost milk production, other diseases, reproductive losses and increased cost of culling. For a 100 cow herd, this could potentially cost the producer up to \$13,000 per year. These lost opportunities are much greater than the clinical ketosis cows which usually get timely treatment. The concept of the iceberg principle of disease is illustrated below. The subclinical diseases are represented as being below the water line – we cannot see them but they are much larger than the clinical diseases that are above the water line and are much more obvious. In herd-based diagnostics we focus on identifying the prevalence of both clinical and subclinical disease in the whole herd. Blood testing of fresh cows for subclinical is an easy procedure that can be done by both the veterinarian and producer to correctly identify affected cows. If it is determined that there is excessive amounts of disease in the herd then all the risk factors are assessed to determine what can be done to reduce the level of disease to acceptable and more profitable levels.

Submitted by Dr. John Marks.

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